REMARKS/ARGUMENTS

Favorable reconsideration of this application in light of the following discussion is respectfully requested.

Claims 1, 3-8, 25, 26, and 31 are presently active in this case, Claims 1, 25, 26 and 31 are amended by the present amendment.

In the outstanding Office Action, Claim 26 was objected to as including informalities; Claims 1, 3, 4, 7, 8, 25 and 31 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as unpatentable over de Groot (U.S. Patent No. 6,421,047) in view of Carrott (U.S. Pat. No. 6,782,369) and Kawamura et al. (U.S. Patent No. 6,404,430, herein Kawamura); and Claims 3, 5, 6 and 26 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as unpatentable over de Groot, Carrott, and Kawamura in further view of Leahy et al. (U.S. Patent No. 6,219,045, herein Leahy).

With respect to the objection of Claim 26 as including informalities, Claim 26 has been amended to overcome the objection. Specifically, Claim 26 is amended to provide antecedent basis for the term "privileged user". Accordingly, Applicants respectfully request that the objection to Claim 26 be withdrawn.

In response to the rejection of Claims 1-8, 25, 26, and 31 under 35 U.S.C. §103(a), Applicant respectfully requests reconsideration of these rejections and traverse the rejections as discussed next.

Claim 1 recites, in part,

> virtual space information storing means for storing, in advance, virtual space information specifying a plurality of types of virtual spaces to be offered for purchase;
>
> virtual space offering means for allowing a first user of a plurality of users to select one of said virtual spaces as a user-specific virtual space leased or owned by said first user of the plurality of users; and
>
> charge controlling means for charging said first user of the plurality of users a fee to own or lease said user-specific virtual space, wherein said fee is based on the specified type of said user-specific virtual space and only said first user of the plurality of users is charged to access said user-specific virtual

> space and the remaining plurality of users may access the virtual space without charge.

Claims 25 and 31 recite similar features.

In the outstanding Office Action Claim 1 was rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over de Groot in view of Carrott and Kawamura. The outstanding Office Action, states that "De Groot however is silent regarding a charge controlling means for charging said privileged user who owns said user-specific virtual space and only the first or privileged user is charged to access the virtual space."

However, the outstanding Office Action relies on Carrott as curing the above noted deficiency in de Groot. The Advisory Action mailed September 20, 2006 states, "The option to charge a distribution fee in Carrott meets claim limitations. Remaining arguments exceed scope of claims."

In response Claims 1, 25 and 31 are amended to more clearly recite that it is only the first user of a plurality of users that is charged to access the user-specific virtual space and the remaining plurality of users may access the virtual space without charge.

Carrott describes a method of allocating commissions for sales made over the internet. Col 7, line 66 of Carrott recites "the invention may choose not to charge a distribution fee." The context of Col. 7, line 66 is that certain physical geographic areas such as the United States are split up into smaller defined exclusive areas (DEAs) such as the American Southwest or California. The right to have customers from a certain DEAs be redirected to your website can be purchased so that customers not visitors are directed to the user's website.[1] However, Carrott does not describe or suggest that only said first user of a plurality of users is charged to access said user-specific virtual space.

In other words, Carrott says nothing about only the first user of a plurality of users being charged and the remaining plurality of users may access the virtual space without

[1] Col. 5 lines 63-64.

charge. Further, Carrott says nothing about charging to access a user-specific virtual space. In Carrott the DEA's are real non-virtual geographic areas such as Zip codes or population centers[2] not virtual spaces. Clearly Carrott does not describe or suggest that only said first user is charged to access said user-specific virtual space, as is recited in Claim 1.

Further the outstanding Office Action states that "the above combination [de Groot and Carrott] is silent regarding the feature of "specifying a plurality of types of virtual spaces to be offered for selection.""

However, the outstanding Office Action relies on Kawamura as curing the above noted deficiencies in de Groot and Carrott.

However, Kawamura merely describes a virtual space data file that includes geographical and image data corresponding to a two-dimensional section organized by x and y coordinates.[3] Kawamura does not describe specifying a plurality of types of virtual spaces to be offered for purchase, such as a large three dimensional room[4] or a room that allows certain number of decorated items.[5] Thus, Kawamura's virtual space feature is not descriptive of Claim 1's virtual space information storing means for storing, in advance, virtual space information specifying a plurality of types of virtual spaces to be offered for purchase, as it does not describe or suggest offering different types of virtual space for purchase.

Further, Kawamura does not cure the deficiencies of de Groot and Carrott with respect to the above noted features of Claims 1, 25 and 31.

Additionally the further cited Leahy does not cure the deficiencies of de Groot, Carrott and Kawamura with respect to the above noted features of Claims 1, 25 and 31.

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[2] Col. 7, lines 27-37.
[3] Kawamura et al. Col. 5, lines 46-53.
[4] Specification page 36.
[5] Specification page 37.

Accordingly, for the above reasons, Applicant respectfully requests that the rejection of Claims 1-8, 25, 26, and 31 under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as unpatentable over de Groot in view of Carrott and Kawamura be withdrawn; and respectfully submits that Claims 1-8, 25, 26, and 31 are patentable over de Groot, Carrott, Kawamura and Leahy considered individually or in any proper combination.

Consequently, in light of the above discussion and in view of the present amendment, the present application is believed to be in condition for allowance and an early and favorable action to that effect is respectfully requested.

Respectfully submitted,

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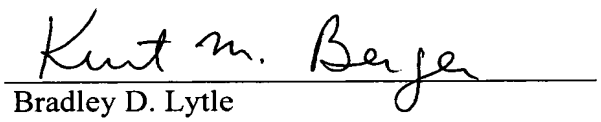

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